

A NEW HOPE FOR THE BLIND

Elisabeth, Queen of Rumania

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THE QUEEN OF RUMANIA

## A NEW HOPE FOR THE BLIND

BY ELISABETH, QUEEN OF RUMANIA  
(*"Carmen Sylva"*)

**M**Y conviction has been for many years that it is a mistake to make the blind work so much with their hands, when brain work would be very much better, and their capacity for brain work shows where their real future lies. They ought to be the greatest students on earth, those two millions of blind people. They ought to be philosophers, theologians, mathematicians, lin-

guists, teachers of languages and music—teachers of everything that does not require the telescope or the microscope, and therefore doctors to a certain degree, masseurs with very deep medical knowledge. And toward this grand aim I have been moving for many years with all my heart and soul; and now I hope to come before the world of the blind with something that will let them rise

ties—a generous enthusiasm, a broad spirit of humanity, and a practical common sense. These qualities Mr. Straus possesses in an eminent degree. They have been shown in his interest in the endeavor to bring laborers and capitalists face to face in a frank interchange of opinions for the purpose of providing a better mutual understanding; in his passionate devotion to the cause of international arbitration; in his identification with the cause of political reform and his readiness to co-operate first with one party and then with the other in making political reform an accomplished fact.

By nature endowed with convictions that are clear-cut, so that he can always define them, and with courage of his convictions so that he is always ready to defend them, he is by training a diplomat, and knows how to affirm a positive faith without exhibiting an aggressive spirit. Said to be the first Hebrew who has ever held a Cabinet office in this country, he carries into the Department of Commerce and Labor, to which he is called, that spirit of fraternalism which we are accustomed to think of as distinctively Christian, but which the Jew, not without reason, claims to have been inherited by Christianity from the older faith. In brief, Mr. Straus seems to me to combine in himself qualities that are ordinarily regarded as antithetical: he belongs socially to the wealthy commercial class, but sympathizes with the democratic movement; he is a reformer and also a sagacious politician; he is a Hebrew and an American of Americans; he has vigorous convictions and tact in maintaining them; he is a defender of American labor and has a hospitable welcome for the immigrant; and he has maintained with a militant courage American rights in Turkey, and yet is a lifelong advocate of universal peace.

The President, who is himself but forty-eight years of age, believes in putting responsibilities on young men—after trial. Mr. Cortelyou is but forty-four years of age, Mr. Meyer forty-eight, and Mr. James R. Garfield, who on the retirement of Mr. Hitchcock will become Secretary of the Interior, is but forty-one. I doubt whether so young a body

was ever before intrusted with the administration of the Federal Government as the one now charged with its direction. Mr. Garfield belongs to what is known as the "Tennis Cabinet" of the President, because he is one of a group who often join him in that recreation. Whether a father's reputation is a help or a handicap to a young man depends on the young man. Both the sons of President Garfield have made good their father's reputation. Mr. James R. Garfield is of slight figure, with the face and frame rather of an academician than of a politician. He is not a fighting man, but he can fight for his convictions when the occasion arises. I have seen him maintain his ground in favor of a radical advance on certain lines, not only against older counselors of the President, but also against the President himself, with an admixture of modesty in himself and confidence in his position which was as effective as it was delightful. He has been heart and soul with the President in his campaign to bring the great corporations under Governmental control, and, our readers may remember, was the one to suggest that the Federal Government could make that control absolute by the simple expedient of requiring any corporation which wished to engage in inter-State commerce to take out a Federal license. In temper and spirit he is quite a man after Mr. Roosevelt's own heart.

Like all strong men, Mr. Roosevelt likes strong men. He has gathered strong men about him. Each one is an independent force; not one of them is an echo, either of the President, of the party, or of his own constituency. Often widely differing on questions of policy and of method, agreed always in their American, that is their democratic, spirit, the body of advisers and administrators—for they are both—who constitute the President's Cabinet are all the better fitted for "team work" because of their distinctive individualities, their differences of temperament and often of opinion, and the fact that, representing one great popular movement, they represent it in different ways and seek to promote it often by differing methods.

rapidly to what I think they ought to be. In my house a machine has been invented that enables every blind person, young or old, weak or strong, to print five thousand sheets a day in raised characters for the blind, without the slightest effort.

A blind printer, Theodoresco, had the first idea of it; and then a genius who entered my service as a servant, but whom I made a kind of secretary from the first, as he was a stenographer and learned merchant, took the idea in hand, worked at it day and night for a year and a half, and now the machine is so simple that any child can in a few minutes work it.

With this machine Monske, the inventor—who, by the by, will not take a penny for himself, but offers his invention to our blind, of whom Rumania has twenty thousand—and I have built after long and careful work our plan for the blind colony or city that we have begun already. Most of the blind are adults, and I saw from the first the utter impossibility of doing what the other countries had done; we are too poor for that. We cannot build enormous schools that cost half a million for seventy blind children, etc. It would be utterly useless. We must begin by finding bread for the fathers of families who have gone blind and are reduced to begging in the streets and in the cemeteries. We have already twenty-two fathers who earn their bread by making chairs and ropes, and lead seals for the sacks of corn, and things that go over the sea, and nets by hundreds of thousands. We mean to build them small houses around big gardens, with church and school in the middle. We mean to let the seeing and the blind in those families work together, have one large kitchen in common and one table, which is already installed in the garden, and where Monske and his family dine with the blind. As soon as there is one kitchen and one table, the women and children can work the knitting-machines, the ropes, the nets, and all the rest—ever so many things, we shall find—and then choose the most gifted among them for higher work. I have one who is going to print Kant and Spinoza as soon as the first machines are ready. The blind will have

as many books and as large libraries as the seeing, for the printing of them creates no overwork, and is, on the contrary, a new way for the blind to earn their living. The difficulty has been till now that too few books were printed. Now every blind man or woman, and even child, will be able to make editions for themselves, and sell them. They can print as many editions at a time as they choose or hope to sell, every blind person for himself, or a few united, setting six or seven pages, and having one press in common. From Germany we have already orders for thirty-six machines before they were ready, so much the need for them is felt everywhere. The simplicity of it strikes every one. I have one house and garden now, but I hope soon to build one little house after the other, with a veranda round it, as Rumanian houses mostly have. The school, the music hall, and the church must be in the middle—one church, that of the country—but we shall have religious instruction in every religion, as the blind are already of four or five different churches. As braille goes all over the world, every language can be printed on this machine. It was a matter of a few days for the blind master to arrange a Rumanian alphabet.

I have promised the first to dear Helen Keller, whose appeal is so true and so touching, and to my poet friend Bertha Jaleron, who is blind and almost quite deaf, growing more deaf every year, so that one can scarcely talk to her any more, and to M. de Sizeranne, the blind friend of the blind; and one I must send to Mr. Bell in Colombia, another to South Africa, where I send many books for the blind already, one to Java, where they are waiting for it, and one to the Sunbeam Society of ministering children in Adelaide in Australia. They are all waiting for it with great impatience, but as we have no factories and no iron in the country, it was slow work at first. I would not sell it to any foreign factory, as I want all the money to flow into my country and to build up my blind city called Vatra Luminoasa—the luminous hearth.

Much light shall stream from the blind people's fingers from this day onward.

They shall have as many libraries as they want, private and public, and these books will spread over the world and bring life and enjoyment to them all. Music will be printed in such quantities that there will soon be no production that the blind cannot read and play, in orchestras, on the organ, and sing with many voices. We shall hear all Handel sung and played by blind people, and, what is most extraordinary, we shall be able to make them books with illustrations, as the press is so powerful that it prints a dollar, with the effigy quite clear.

It is not to be foreseen what the blind may grasp by these means of instruction which bring them into contact with every thought that has been expressed in writing in every language of the world. And as the inventors do not take a penny for themselves, my city will rise rapidly. They sing at their work already, and when they first entered the new home they stood there disconsolately and were so afraid! But the seeing children already are accustomed to rush up to them, to seize their hands and to conduct them joyfully to their home, with bright welcome. Their wives are no more in despair, but smile and hope and know that they can educate their children. We shall have blind washerwomen among the seeing; with the knitting-machines we shall not only make the socks and woolen underclothes for the whole establishment, but a great deal for selling, so that this will be another source of income for the Vatra Luminoasa. We hope to weave also and to make carpets, not only brushes and chairs. I am sure we shall discover many new ways of helping; but to me the principal thing is no more to separate them, but to keep them together in a happy, socialistic community of my invention.

We shall begin a newspaper directly, and I have sent for a blind English lady who writes three languages perfectly, and who is going to be our correspondent on the Hammond machine; and she will teach English and German, and write stories, and be happy, too, I hope. I believe that all the inmates of the Vatra Luminoasa will be as happy as their sad condition will allow, and help each other, and laugh and sing, and

live as if they were happier than the seeing, that are not so well taken care of. A lady has made me a present of twenty thousand square meters of her country place, so that we can have gardens there, taken care of by the blind, that will bring forth all our fruit and vegetables. The gifts are flowing into our box during the exhibition. There have even been tenpence and half francs from poor workpeople. Everybody feels that this is going to be a grand thing and a blessed one, and that I am going to give back to the country ever so many useful citizens who were beggars before.

From America I hope for large orders, as our machine, instead of costing the nearly three thousand francs that it did to buy the American machine and get it here, costs only three hundred, payable in small sums, so that every blind person can earn enough with the machine to pay for it. I fancy that several blind will unite to buy one machine with many plates to set the types on. In Germany six or seven ladies had united to make the big cyclopædia of Meyer for the blind. It will take seven years and cost ten thousand marks. Monske says he hopes to make that cyclopædia in six months, with three blind to help, and to earn ten thousand marks by the number of books he can issue.

The whole world will change for the blind as soon as they can have as many books as the seeing, and are no longer dependent on the good or bad taste of the charitable souls who copy. The blind lady I spoke of before wrote to me to guess what had been her reading book all the last summer. A book on mushrooms! And, as she rightly says, never a blind person can pick them, and as to eating, the blind take what is set before them in good faith that one won't poison them! And this lady used to give sixty lessons a week, and is highly cultivated.

Many people are so cruel in doing good, because they do not watch the lives of the unhappy ones enough, but follow their own tastes and judgment, which are often very limited and insufficient. The Theodoresco-Monske machine is a work of genius, and will bring happiness to many.

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